DOCUMENT RESUME

FL 000 972

ED 023 328

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Old Saxon in Pre-Service Training.

American Association of Teachers of German.
Pub Date May 68
Note - 4p.
Journal Cit - The German Quarterly; v41 n3 p433-36 May 1968
EDRS Price MF - $0.25 HC - $0.30
Descriptors - *Curriculum Design, *German, *Graduate Study, Indo European Languages, Language Programs, Language Teachers, Literature, Second Language Learning, *Teacher Education, *Textbook Content

The article argues that Old Saxon, rather than Gothic or Old High German, should be studied in graduate German departments. The view presented is that Old Saxon is not as difficult, the costs involved are less, and the literary rewards are greater. Suggestions for an appropriate textbook and curriculum placement for an Old Saxon course are given. (DS)

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OLD SAXON IN PRE-SERVICE TRAINING

W. F. Twaddell

In a persuasive brief article, "Vom pädagogischen Wert des Altsächsischen" (THE GERMAN QUARTERLY, XL [November 1967], 693-697), Mr. Ulrich A. Groenke calls for consideration of Old Saxon as a logical introduction to the study of the older Germanic languages. Both Mr. Groenke and the editor of THE GERMAN QUARTERLY* deserve thanks for presenting a constructive discussion of curricular policy. Today, when impatience with long-drawn-out graduate study is widespread and often justified, it is a professional responsibility to reexamine the components of that study.

A graduate student who is going to become a member of an American German department can look forward to a career of teaching the German language, at least during his early professional life, and teaching and doing research in some aspect of German literature or philology. At present a large majority of our graduate students look forward to teaching and research in German literature of the past three centuries.

On behalf of these students, one may well join Mr. Groenke in asking whether a traditional philological minimum of Gothic, Old High German, and Middle High German is happily chosen. It would be hard to argue that this minimum contributes directly to the teaching of elementary and intermediate German, or to scholarship in modern German literature. The only argument in favor of Gothic and Old High German would have to be that "a Ph.D. in German is supposed to know a little bit about the entire field" in addition to a detailed knowledge of some small part or parts of the field. It is on this basis that a case can be made for the study of Old Saxon rather than (not as an introduction to) Gothic and Old High German.

As literature, there is no contest between the *Hêliand-Genesis* poems and Wulfila's translation: the Old Saxon poems are literature and the Gothic translation is not. There is very small literary reward for the study of Old High German except for perhaps fifteen pages of verse and a few pages of Notker's prose (especially MCp); the verse should present few problems for a reader who has become familiar with Old Saxon.

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*The article in question was accepted for publication by the former editor, Robert M. Browning.

The costs are high for both Gothic and Old High German. Gothic with its morphological complexity places a burden on the memory or on the digital agility of the learner. The dreadful complexities of date and dialect that make up the study of Old High German must have faded from the knowledge of nearly all Ph.Ds. within a few years of the awarding of their degrees.

What would be the reward for studying Old Saxon? In part, like the reward for studying Middle High German: the experience of a literary document in an older medium at an older stage of linguistic history and—put negatively—the avoidance of ignorance about a respectable part of a relevant tradition. The flavor of the older Germanic languages is at least as accessible from Old Saxon as from any of the others, except perhaps Old Norse: the four parts of strong verbs, the profusion of multilayer genitive constructions, the perfective aspect grammar, the change-of-subject nominative pronouns. As to rhetoric and style, Old Saxon offers, though to be sure less strikingly than Old Norse or Old English, the features of alliteration, kennings, and profuse variations.[1]

What is the cost of studying Old Saxon? At present, certainly less for the American student of German (or for the German student of English) than the cost of studying Gothic or Old High German. But even this cost is excessive; a student with primarily literary interests still has to make his way through a lot of philology to get at the Old Saxon language, with the teaching materials now available. What is needed is:

(1) a rationally normalized[2] text on the basis of frequency and/or etymology so that all dative singular forms of a particular noun class have the same ending; that variant spellings of a given stem are levelled out, etc.;

(2) a straightforward "grammar" section, with declensions and conjugations in accord with the normalizations, and a syntactic exposition of the principal phrase and clause structures and the major sentence types;

(3) a carefully built end-vocabulary, made possible by the existence of the Sehrt *Wörterbuch;*

(4) a fairly scant set of notes, principally references to the corresponding biblical passages, but very occasionally elucidating a crux (of which there are surprisingly few in the 6000+ lines of text).

There need be no introduction describing the background of the poems or the language; presumably each instructor would have his own favored presentations.

Such a textbook should contain the entire poetic corpus *(Hêliand* and *Genesis)*. This is more than might need to be read entire in a semester; but let the instructor select, not the textbook editors.

I estimate that two people, working full time for fifteen months, could prepare acceptable printer's copy for *Hêliand* and *Genesis*. Their support, and subsidies for the conference and the printing, would be a wholly justified grant by a private or national foundation.

Such an Old Saxon course would fit into a functional minimum philology-and-linguistics requirement for the future member of a German department. It would be supplemented by a representative sampling of Middle High German literature, and two courses on the German language: (a) its present structure as described in a modern scientific framework—indispensable for the future teacher of the language as language; (b) its history: Germanic within Indo-European, High German within Germanic; the principal phonological events from the Germanic consonant shift to the Early New High German vowel changes; the evolution of the phrase-structure grammar in noun and verb from the earlier suffix grammar; the socio-linguistics of external influences (layers of loanwords reflecting culture contacts); and the major trends in dialect separatism and the emergence of standard written and spoken German.

Those four courses would not be an unreasonable part of a total graduate curriculum, and they would have some relevance to the general information of a member of a German department and a teacher of the German language. There is an interconnection among the four courses, but there would not need to be a rigid sequential arrangement.

Let it be repeated that this is the philological battery intended for the literature-focused student. Obviously the student expecting a career in philology or linguistics will have to learn to deal with unnormalized texts of Old Saxon and Middle High German. He will need to memorize the Gothic morphologies and the dialects and dates of Old High German documents. And a great deal more.[3]

A distant prospect involves our colleagues in English departments. There has been an understandable reaction against the onerous require-

ment several decades ago in some institutions that all English literature Ph.D. candidates study Gothic and Old French in addition to a very detailed sound-by-sound history of the English language for some 1200 years. Nowadays young professors of English are likely to be unaware of and uninterested in the facts of their language and its history. Perhaps the word would spread that the Old Saxon course over in the German department is a good preparation for enjoying *Beowulf*. And from that little acorn there might grow some twenty-first century oaks in Anglistics.

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[1] The first prose preface reports that the *Hêliand* poet was considered no mean bard.

[2] There should be a preparatory informal two-or-three day conference of a half-dozen or so interested scholars and teachers to discuss principles of normalization and some specific matters, e.g., use of thorn, treatment of /b/ and of initial g and j, the representation of unstressed vowels. Such a conference would have practical value and is politically indispensable.

[3] Perhaps in return he may not be required to become familiar with all the major works of Grillparzer, Hebbel, Keller, Kleist, Ludwig, and Meyer, nor to compare Görres with Chamisso, or Gerhardt with Logau.

The German Quarterly

VOL. XLI - MAY, 1968 - No. 3

PUBLISHED BY
THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF GERMAN
in January, March, May, and November
Membership Issue in September